



Paseo Monumental provided an historic Sunday in Oranjestad

Aruba's Monument Bureau celebrated ten years of existence this past week, and thanks to its Director, Yvonne Webb-Kock, Aruba's history and landmark buildings are being restored to their original glory for many generations to enjoy. This was truly a cause for celebration, and Sunday, September 10 was a memorable day for those that partook of the Paseo Monumental, a walking tour of the island's historic buildings, accompanied by a number of interesting entertainments and presentations.

The day began in the Plaza Henriquez, named for the landmark house located there, which is also the headquarters of the Monument Bureau. The Minister of Labor, Culture, and Sport, Ramon Lee, opened the Paseo Monumental with the raising of the flag along with Ms. Webb-Kock after the opening speeches. Minister Lee paraphrased architect Frank Lloyd Wright in expressing that "without the characteristic architecture of their culture a people have no soul." Ms. Webb Kock gave a brief history of the Monument Bureau, which originally consisted of two people, but has grown to include many staff members that are devoted to their task of preserving Aruba's architectural heritage.

Adjacent to the Henriquez home is the Ecury complex, which is being renovated to house Aruba's Museum of Natural History and Archeology. On the other side of the Monument Bureau stands the Wild house, home of merchant Victor Wild and an example of what is called a "Town Cunucu House," with characteristic dormers.

Maps and guides were provided for sightseers to take in the many landmark buildings of Oranjestad at their own pace. They total twenty-four restored buildings, a number of which also conducted programs that highlighted Aruba's history and culture, with folkloric music and dancing. The Plaza Alameda featured the Aruba Steel Showband and at the courthouse there was a reenactment of a notorious case from 1903. Music could be heard throughout the town the entire day, as shows were conducted at the Instituto di Cultura, and the Stadhuis, which was the first building restored by the Monument Bureau. The Historical Museum at Fort Zoutman was open all day, and performances and activities were held in the courtyard, as they were in the courtyard of the Numismatic Museum, considered one of the Monument Bureau's greatest triumphs, it was originally Aruba's first bank, and the ancestral home of the Eman family.

Each landmark building had a informative history hung at the entrance in Dutch, English and Papiamentu. A beautiful full color complementary book describing each building with photographs made a very nice souvenir of the day, as did various items that showcase Aruban culture and were offered for sale from various organizations such as Mi Cutisa.

The Paseo Monumental and tenth anniversary celebration provided an exciting and unforgettable day for all those that attended, and an opportunity for islanders and island visitors alike to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for Aruban culture and history.